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"heralds," and "early thorns," and many a rarity, not seen at other times of the year. We think of these riches as we tread the soft mosses under foot—graceful Hypnums, fern-like Thuidiums, and soft pale squeezy Sphagnums in shadowy tints of yellow, lavender and rose; and here the stream is reached edged with a cloud of golden daffodils. In its limpid depths, sticklebacks in livery of brilliant green and red are keeping jealous watch over the curious nests where their ladies are busy in egg laying. A lazy newt wriggles up to the surface, emits a few bubbles, and disappears once more into the dimness. A troop of merry whirligig beetles keep up a dance on the flashing surface of the water, starting away like broken quicksilver, when a large water-bug charges amongst them. Down amongst the green starwort, and the pectinate leaves of the water violet (*Hottonia*), can be seen the spiders, clothed with a silvery garment of air, just beginning the singular structure of their nests. Anon the quiet is broken by the flash and splash of a large Dytiscus, a giant of the beetle tribe, as he re-enters his realm of petty tyranny. Soon the gleaming wings of purple swallow and martin will be reflected in the mirror-like water, and a heavy toll taken on the seething life around. But brook and pond must be left behind as we wend our way through budding groves of young elm and silver birch, neath which the broad-leaved handsome garlic is swelling into flowerhood, and just beyond a hazy sea of blue-bells glimmers. Around us are the little anemone plots, like stars appearing, with large roots of struggling primrose, and great rosettes of lanceolate-leaved marsh thistle, tangled breaks of briars, and little companies of campion just in bud. Here for a space, the ground ivy with its blue flowers has it all its own way. But now the wood is left behind, as we take our way through fields aglow with purple orchis, and budding cowslip, rank grasses and dusky "sweeps" (*Luzula Sylvestris*) The spotted leaved "Lords-and-ladies" looks at us from the hedge-bank, till the "wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower" meets us at our very threshold. The music of the earth is ringing in our ears, and countless forms of beauty are peopling our mind, which will fill up with sweetest remembrance the sorrowful hours of life, deaden their pain, and bring back to old age the living memories of youth.

HOW TO TEACH THE BIBLE TO OUR CHILDREN.

By the Rev. Henry Seeley.

The Book of books is the Bible, *i.e.*, the Book. As parents, we have to do with many books, and are often inclined to sigh as we remember the old saying, truer than ever now, "of making many books there is no end." I am not to write a dissertation on the literary character and position of the Bible, or it were easy to show, as many have shown during ages past, its superiority to all other books from many points of view. But it is a comfort to know that a real, intelligent knowledge of it is, from an ordinary educational standard, perhaps the best preparation for general book-knowledge, and that this library of 66 books (for of such we are thinking,) is full of every possible variety that its purposes would allow, and in these days of travel and research and criticism, it is the book of all others that most touches the studies of our time.

A few years since, when renowned students were canvassed as to what would be in their respective ideas the hundred best works in existence, there was a very interesting diversity in their lists; but when some had omitted the Bible, the astonishment expressed was met in general by the answer that its pre-eminence was taken for granted, *cela va sans dire*. This reminds one of what was said by Sir M. Monier-Williams, when speaking of the sacred books of the East, so often placed in competition with *the* Sacred Book of the East: "Pile them, if you will, on the left side of your study table, but place your own Holy Bible on the right side—all by itself—all alone—and with a wide gap between."

Now as it is very comforting to recognize the superiority and the usefulness of the Bible in our learning and teaching of books, it is specially important that the Bible should be dealt with and taught by itself, by which I mean that it must be allowed its acknowledged position—all by itself—all alone—and with a wide gap between it and all other books; for if this is said in comparing and contrasting it with

"sacred books," so also it may be said of its separation from what is called "profane literature." It is the *Holy* Bible in the sense of its being thus set apart, as well as in the special senses to denote which the adjective is used. In spite of all that has ever been said, or attempted to be said, to the contrary, by vulgar assailants, or by scholarly critics, the mature judgment of learned men, who are willing to think until they have reached the legitimate conclusions from the data before them, is that here, if anywhere, and here, in sober reality, we have a—the—*Holy* Book, "*whole; healthy;* perfect in a moral sense; set apart to a sacred use"—("Chambers's Etymological Dictionary.") We will first of all then keep the adjective, and for ourselves and our children do what is sensible and right in treating with reverence that which is holy. There is a difference never to be forgotten or ignored between the literature called *par excellence* the Scriptures, and all other literature. The difference is both in degree and in kind. But from what has been said, it is clear that the Bible is not a literature that can be regarded as having no contact with other literature. Having satisfied ourselves that this book is not in its position *primus inter pares*, we now proceed to assert that it is at once the leader in literature, and that its points of contact with the scholarship of the world in general are not merely innumerable, but in the fulfilment of its prophecies, as time goes on, and through the enlarged scope of historians, explorers, philologists, and other scientists, its touch with other books and things is every day becoming closer and more intimate.

It was necessary at the outset of these papers to state these things by way of preparation for our special remarks.

The big question as to how to teach the Bible to our children may perhaps be considered in regard to their ever varying ages and capacities. Here is a text to start from, always specially attractive I doubt not to the majority of the mothers who will probably be interested in our enquiry. "Abide thou in the things which thou hast learnt, knowing of what persons thou hast learnt them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction, which

is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

The writer treasures his large type fourpenny Testament, one of the first of that sort, it is thought, ever issued, in which his name was written forty years since, and wherein are to be found precious pencil-marks made by the holy mother, who "closed her beautiful eyes and flew to Jesus" many years ago. The most valued of all those marks is now before him. It is by the side of Ephesians iv. 28, and was literally made "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The trifling theft in infant days, the first and the last, it is believed, was discovered at the moment by the wise and tender parent. Forthwith, gently though sadly, the little child only just learning to read was shown the holy words, and while his mother pointed to each with her pencil he was made to say it, until the verse thus repeatedly read, was indelibly imprinted on the memory, and associated with the prevented act, which might have been the commencement only of other acts of its kind, if a commonplace reproof or correction had been used. "Her children arise up and call her blessed."

A plan that commends itself in view of the virtuous bringing up of a child to lead a godly and a Christian life, which was promised at the baptism of the little ones, is to let the parental gift to mark the occasion be a Bible, of such a kind as that it may be prized for its beauty and valued for its useful type, references, &c.

The Family Bible should centralize many an idea of home training and influence. Kept in its own place, used for its special purpose in family worship, it becomes a symbol of the domestic honour given to the Word of God. The infant soon learns this objective lesson, and is ready the sooner to catch the words and their meaning, as he hears them in this simple daily service.

It is perhaps necessary here to mention the use of pictures. The mediæval English saying, "pictures are laymen's books," need be no longer true of "grown-ups." But the Bible is often best taught to the babies by the exhibition of a truthful Bible picture explained as far as may be in Bible words, sometimes read straight out of the volume. I say *truthful*, because most Bible pictures are untruthful. The

pictures that have survived from the dark ages, or have been imitated from the artists of that gloomy period, are often, if not generally, quite mischievous when used with the desire of increasing Bible knowledge. I know it is reckoned a heresy in these æsthetic days to write thus, but so-called heretics have often been those who have defended the truth. Let us by all means admire the works of old artists and masters as works of art, or as suggestive groupings of symbols. But symbolical pictures are misleading to little ones, who need verisimilitude of as literal a kind as they can get. To paint, *e.g.*, the mother of our Lord, kneeling at a faldstool of oak, carved in decorated Early English Style, herself clothed in blue nun's veiling, and holding a lily in her hand, while an angel in the form of a young woman gracefully draped, with gigantic wings of many colours comes to her; the group being placed near the oriel window of an English mansion—all this is a tissue of fictions to the infant mind, to explain which is to obscure the Bible story. To us who have learnt to regard it as a mere combination of artistic effect and ecclesiastical emblem, such a picture may, or may not—most probably the latter—convey a few useful thoughts, albeit we know that the Jewish maiden was a peasant in a Nazarene cottage, and that Gabriel appeared in some human disguise veiling his glory, but sufficiently from the circumstances leaving his angelic nature manifest, or that he came in angelic form wholly impossible to depict on canvas.

There are two artistic errors that are perhaps more misleading than others when dealing with Scripture story. First the conventional Christ is an unturbaned Italian or Spaniard strikingly like Christopher Columbus in the Painted Hall of Greenwich Hospital; and secondly, angels are imitations as to figure and wings of the heathen Goddess of Victory, and have nothing in common with the various brief descriptions in the Bible of the heavenly visitants.

The right thing to do in the use of pictures is to choose those that are nearest the truth, explaining even to very little children as soon as it is desirable, and briefly, that the painter made a mistake now and then. A picture of an "angel" holding a drawn sword, driving Adam and Eve from the Garden, is nearly useless, as being so much unlike

the grandeur of the brief account in Gen. iii. 24, which is rendered a little clearer in the Revised Version. A picture of a chubby child of nine, meeting Goliath, may be found in a recent edition of "Line upon Line," and it is best to cut the picture out before giving the good book to the young reader.

It is more important still that in the simple books about the Bible that we do well to read to infants, or as soon as they can read a little, place in their own hands, the statements paraphrasing Bible accounts should be accurate. Many persons have thoroughly learnt things out of the Bible as they suppose, which turn out on examination to have been derived from other sources. I have been gravely told by a lady, that the custard apple was the forbidden fruit in Eden's Garden, and amazement was expressed at my ignorance of the Book of Genesis, because I did not know it. I remember hearing an aged labouring man saying that Noah's ark took a hundred and twenty years to build. I asked him where he found that stated. On being told that it was not in the Bible, he replied: "Then it must have been in the 'Peep of Day.'" Those who are acquainted with Mrs. Mortimer's excellent books will know that some other book must have misled him, though it may be stated in passing that the "Peep of Day" needs to be read carefully, lest wrong ideas be inadvertently conveyed. In connection with the mention of such books, I may illustrate the often advantage of choosing Bible language in preference to paraphrase. What little child does not love the shortest text in the Bible, "Jesus wept." I recollect my own dislike in juvenile days of the sentence put in lieu of it, "As Jesus walked along, the tears rolled down His cheeks."

A closing suggestion for this first paper may be that careful, accurate, beautiful, reverent reading is called for in the earliest as well as in all later efforts to teach the Word of God. All mothers know the life-long influence of early impressions, and an infant disciple of the Saviour may be shocked by the indifferent treatment he may see accorded to the Bible, and already a seed of unbelief and irreligion may be sown as a result of the offence thus early given to one of these little ones which believe in Him.—Matt. xviii. 6.